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State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

SECRET

OFFICIAL CONTINGENCY STATEMENT DEFENDING THE
US RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITE PROGRAM

International law permits observation of the earth from outer space whether by visual, electronic, photographic, or other means. In this respect, observation of national territories from outer space does not differ from observation from the high seas or from points outside of national air space which is sanctioned by international law. Such action is peaceful in character, and does not interfere with other activities on earth or in space. To date, there have been no international agreements prohibiting the use of space for any specific activities. For example, we consider that the observations and photography made by Major Titov while aboard Vostok II, as indeed any other observation which the USSR may be conducting from outer space are not prohibited. Observation of the earth from satellites makes possible the accomplishment of many tasks beneficial to mankind, such as weather forecasting, resource surveys, mapping, and geodesy. Many such activities have military applications, but this does not mean that they are non-peaceful or prohibited.

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